

GOVERNMENT IN JAMESTOWN, 1619

LEVEL

Elementary

GUIDING QUESTION

What did the English government look like at Jamestown in 1619?

VIRGINIA STANDARDS AND HISTORICAL SKILLS

SOL: VS. 3d

Analyzing and interpreting primary sources, analyzing the impact of geographic features; organizing information

LESSON OVERVIEW

1619 was a year of many firsts for the Virginia colony, including the first legislative assembly held in English North America. This initial meeting of the General Assembly convened in the choir of the Jamestown church and consisted of the governor, his Council, and elected representatives from all of the settled areas of Virginia. The assembly marked the beginning of representative government, based on English law and political institutions, in what is now the United States of America and is the antecedent of today's Virginia General Assembly, the oldest legislative body in English America. In this lesson, students will explore the first meeting of the General Assembly in August 1619 as an example of representative legislature by 1) identifying the burgesses and locations they represented using a map of the early settlements, and 2) working in groups to analyze the primary source, "Laws Enacted by the First General Assembly of Virginia."

MATERIALS

- "Guardians of Jamestown, 1619" video clip: ["The First General Assembly Meeting in Virginia"](#)
- [Map and Map Key: Towns, Plantations, Settlements, and Communities in Virginia, 1607-1624](#)
- [Student Worksheet: Participants of the First General Assembly Meeting at Jamestown](#)
- [Excerpts from the "Laws Enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia"](#)

PROCEDURE

Warm up/Staging the Question

1. Discuss with students: If we wanted to decide on new rules for our school, how could everyone have a voice without all of the students in our school sharing their ideas?
2. Introduce the lesson on government at Jamestown by showing the “Guardians of Jamestown, 1619” video clip, [“The First General Assembly Meeting in Virginia”](#). Discuss what students learned as a class.

Main Activity

1. Assign each student the name of one of the representatives that was present at the first General Assembly meeting. Have students find their partner (by plantation/city). Students will work with their partners to find the plantation/city that they will represent at the first General Assembly meeting on the [map](#) and record the matching number on the [student worksheet](#). Discuss as a class the connection between the James River and the locations of the first 11 settlements.
2. Place students in new groups, and distribute 1-2 of the laws passed at the first General Assembly to each group. You may choose to have students read an abridged version of the [“Laws Enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia”](#) beforehand or only have students focused on their assigned law(s).
3. In their groups, students will analyze their law(s) by answering the following questions:
 - What does your law say?
 - What do you think it means?
 - Why do you think this law was necessary?
 - Do you think it was fair? Why or why not?
 - Do you think this law should be changed? If so, how would you change it? Try to reach a consensus in order to make a recommendation to the Virginia Company.

Note: This lesson could be adapted to a digital format by posting the questions in Google Classroom, and assigning different colors for group responses.

4. Have students discuss their analysis of the laws as a class.
5. As a closing activity, have students respond to the following question: “In your own words, what did the government at Jamestown look like in 1619?”

EXCERPTS FROM THE “LAWS ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA”

*The following is a simplified version of some of the laws passed by the General Assembly in 1619.
(Courtesy of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation).*

All persons shall attend services on the Sabbath, both in the morning and afternoon. All those who bear arms shall bring their swords, powder and shot and everyone who shall disobey this law shall forfeit three shillings each time for the use of the church unless lawfully excused. If a servant in this case shall willfully neglect his master's command, he shall suffer bodily punishment.

If any man is found to be an idler, though a freedman, it shall be lawful for that incorporation of plantation to which he belongs, to appoint him a master to serve for wages, until he shows apparent signs of amendment.

If anyone gambles at dice or cards, he shall lose all his winnings and both winners and losers shall forfeit ten shillings each, with one ten shilling to go to the person who reported him and the rest to charitable uses in the location where the fault is committed.

If anyone is found to be drunk, he shall be reprovved privately by the Minister the first time, the second time he shall be reprovved publicly, and the third time he will lie in bolts [leg irons] for 12 hours in the house of the Provost Marshall and will pay his fee.

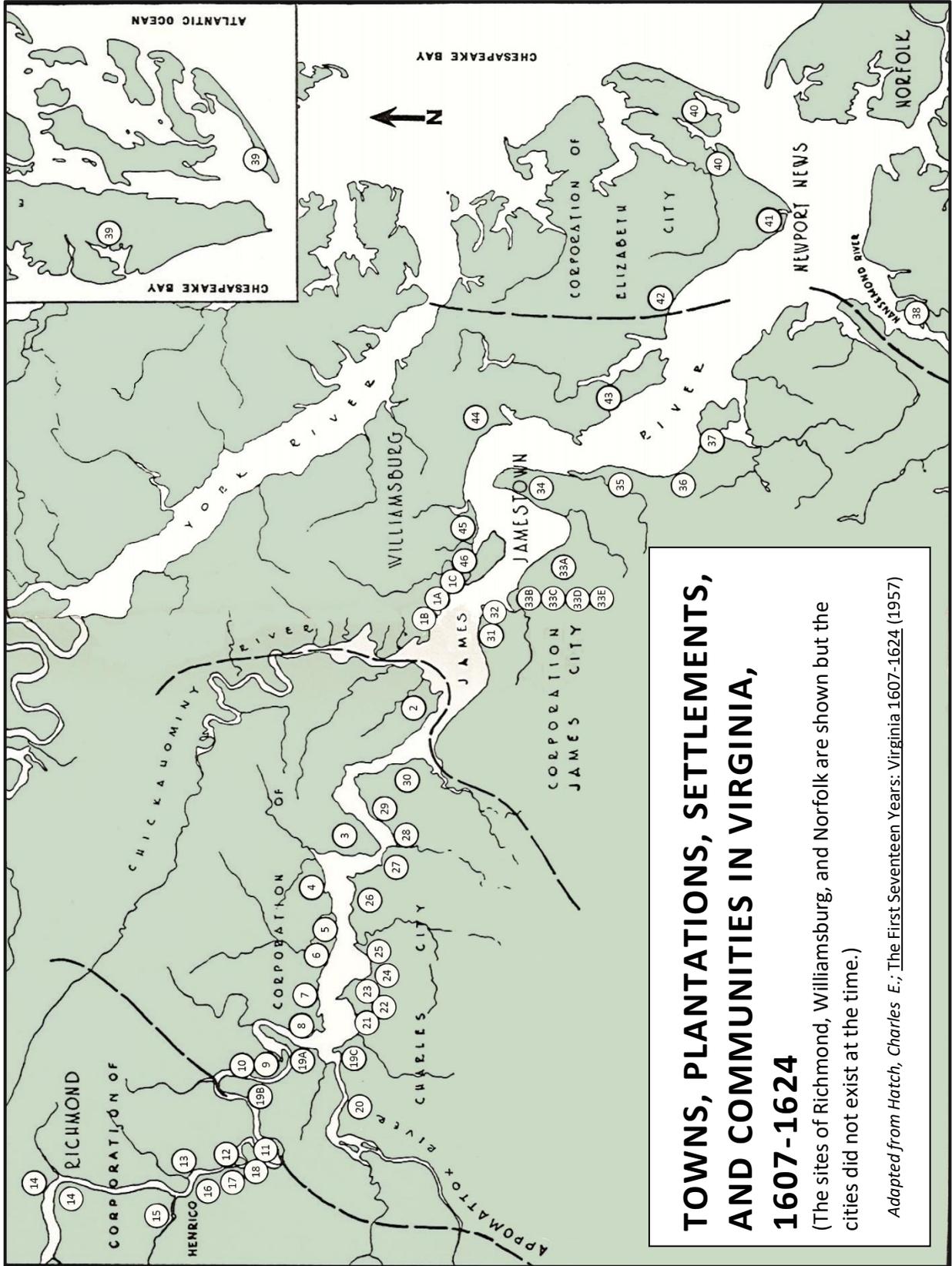
Every man may trade with the Indians, except for the servants upon pain of whipping.

No man may sell or give any of the greater hoes to the Indians.

No man may go above twenty miles from his dwelling place, nor upon any voyage whatsoever shall be absent for seven days without first having made known to the Governor or commander of the place where he lives.

No Englishman may bring injury or oppression against the Indians whereby the present peace might be disturbed and ancient quarrels might be revived.

Source: Kingsbury, Susan, ed., The Records of the Virginia Company of London (1906).



**TOWNS, PLANTATIONS, SETTLEMENTS,
AND COMMUNITIES IN VIRGINIA,
1607-1624**
 (The sites of Richmond, Williamsburg, and Norfolk are shown but the
 cities did not exist at the time.)
 Adapted from Hatch, Charles E.; The First Seventeen Years: Virginia 1607-1624 (1957)

MAP KEY

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Pasbehegh Country - 1617 | 24 Truelove's Plantation - c.1621 |
| 1A Argall Town - 1617 | 25 "Powle-Brooke" or Merchant's Hope - 1619 |
| 1B Pasbehegh - c.1617 | 26 Maylock's Plantation - c.1618 |
| 1C "The Maine" - 1608 | 27 Flowerdieu Hundred - Plercey's Hundred -
c.1618 |
| 2 Smith's (Southampton) Hundred - 1617 | 28 "Captain Spilmans Divident" Bef. 1622 |
| 3 "Tanks Weyanoke" - c.1616 | 29 Ward's Plantation - c.1619 |
| 4 Swinhows - Bef. 1622 | 30 Martin's Brandon - c.1617 |
| 5 Westover - c.1619 | 31 "Paces-Paines" - 1620 |
| 6 Berkeley Town and Hundred - 1619 | 32 Burrows' Mount - c.1624 |
| 7 Causey's Care (or "Clears") - c.1613 | 33 Plantations "Over the river from Jamestown" |
| 8 West and Shirley Hunred - c.1613 | 33A Treasurer's Plantation - c.1621 |
| 9 Upper Hundred - "Curis" - c.1613 | 33B Hugh Crowder's Plantation - c.1622 |
| 10 "Diggs His Hundred" - c.1613 | 33C Edward Blaney's Plantation - c.1624 |
| 11 The "Citty of Henricus" (Henrico) - 1611 | 33D Roger Smith's Plantation - c.1622 |
| 12 Arrahatock - Bef. 1619 | 33E Samuel Mathews' Plantation - c.1622 |
| 13 The College Lands - c.1619 | 34 Hog Island - 1609 |
| 14 The Falls - 1609 | 35 Lawne's Plantation - 1619 |
| 15 Falling Creek - c.1619 | 36 Warrascoyack (Bennett's Plantation) - 1621 |
| 16 Sheffield's Plantation - Bef. 1622 | 37 "Basse's Choyse" - 1622 |
| 17 Proctor's Plantation - Bef. 1622 | 38 Nansemond - 1609 |
| 18 Coxendale - c.1611 | 39 The Eastern Shore - c.1614 |
| 19 "Bermuda Citty" (Charles City) Incorp. | 40 Elizabeth City (Kecoughtan) - 1610 |
| 19A Bermuda Hundred - 1613 | 41 Newport News - 1621 |
| 19B Rochdale Hundred - 1613 | 42 Blunt Point - c.1621 |
| 19C Bermuda City - 1613 | 43 Mulbery Island - c.1617 |
| 20 Plercey's Plantation - c.1620 | 44 Martin's Hundred - 1618 |
| 21 Jordan's Journey - c.1619 | 45 Archer's Hope - c.1619 |
| 22 Woodleefe's Plantation - c.1619 | 46 "Neck-of-Land neare James Citty" - Bef. 1624 |
| 23 Chaplain's Choice - c.1623 | |

PARTICIPANTS IN THE FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING AT JAMESTOWN

Directions: Analyze the map to locate the plantation/city that you will represent at the first General Assembly meeting. Record the matching number on the table.

GOVERNOR Sir George Yeardley

SPEAKER Master John Pory

GOVERNOR'S COUNCILORS Captain Nathaniel Powell, Master Samuel Macock, Master John Rolfe, Captain Francis West, Master John Pory, Master William Wickam

MAP NUMBER	AREA	BURGESSES
	James City	Captain William Powell; Ensign William Spense
	Charles City	Samuel Sharpe; Samuel Jordan
	City of Henricus	Thomas Dowse; John Polentine
	Kiccowtan	Captain William Tucker; William Capp
	Smythe's Hundred	Captain Thomas Graves; Mr. Walter Shelley
	Martin's Hundred	Mr. John Boys; John Jackson
	Argall's Guifte	Mr. Thomas Pawlett; Mr. Edward Gourgaing
	Flowerdieu Hundred	Ensign Roffingham; Mr. Jefferson
	Captain Lawnes Plantation	Captain Christopher Lawne; Ensign Washer
	Captain Ward's Plantation	Captain Ward; Lieutenant Gibbes
	Martin's Brandon Plantation	Thomas Davis; Robert Stacy